

Avoidance and Management of Bullying Policy

Drafted by	Katherine Hinton, Head of Corporate Services	Approved by	The Board of Our Village
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Reviewed by	Ruth Holdaway, CEO	Next review date	31 July 2026

Introduction

Our Village Network Inc (“Our Village”) supports and defends the right of every staff member and volunteer to perform their duties without being subjected to bullying.

Every staff member and volunteer is responsible for providing an environment that is supportive of this approach. All staff and volunteers must treat one another with respect, and must act as a beacon for good behaviour in the workplace.

It is the obligation and responsibility of every board member, staff member and volunteer to ensure that the workplace is free from bullying and victimisation.

Everyone working or volunteering at Our Village is responsible for the care and protection of our people and for reporting information about suspected bullying.

Our Village is fully committed to its obligation to prevent and eliminate bullying in the workplace.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline Our Village’s position on bullying and to document the process which is to be followed should any grievance relating to bullying arise. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Bullying Response Procedure.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers in the workplace. This policy also applies to the behaviour of third parties towards staff and volunteers.

‘Staff’ includes: employees, persons seeking employment, students and interns.

‘Volunteers’ includes: anyone donating their time to Our Village

‘Third Parties’ includes: all contractors and third party suppliers

‘Workplace’ includes:

- Our Village premises, during or outside business hours;

Turning pre-loved into re-loved so every child thrives.

- Any other place where work is performed by Our Village staff or volunteers;
- Any other physical or virtual place where work-related activities (including retreats, conferences, Our Village organised social activities) take place;
- Transport used for business purposes; and
- Any other physical or virtual place where the conduct has caused (or is likely to cause) serious damage to the relationship between the relevant staff member, volunteer or third party and Our Village or damages Our Village interests or where the conduct is otherwise incompatible with the duty of a staff member/volunteer/contractor. For example this may include sexual harassment outside work.

Definitions

'Bullying' is repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons that creates a risk to health and safety. It includes behaviour that could be expected to intimidate, offend, degrade, humiliate, **undermine or threaten**.

'Repeated behaviour' refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour and can involve a range of behaviours over time.

'Unreasonable behaviour' is behaviour that a reasonable person, having considered the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

Examples of behaviour, whether intentional or unintentional, that may be considered to be workplace bullying if they are repeated, unreasonable and create a risk to health and safety include but are not limited to:

- abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments
- unjustified criticism or complaints
- deliberately excluding someone from workplace activities
- withholding information that is vital for effective work performance
- setting unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level
- denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of the worker
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours
- changing work arrangements such as rosters and leave to deliberately inconvenience a particular staff member/s and or volunteer/s.

Workplace bullying can be carried out in a variety of ways including through email, text or social media channels.

Workplace bullying can occur between staff / volunteers (sideways), from managers to staff members/volunteers(downwards), or staff members/volunteers to managers (upwards).

Reasonable management action is not considered to be workplace bullying if it is carried out lawfully and in a reasonable manner in the circumstances. Examples of reasonable management action include but are not limited to:

- setting reasonable performance goals, standards and deadlines
- deciding not to select a worker for promotion where a reasonable process is followed
- informing a worker about unsatisfactory work performance in an honest, fair and constructive way
- taking disciplinary action, including suspension or terminating employment.

Differences of opinion and disagreements are generally not considered to be workplace bullying.

Bullying that directly inflicts physical pain, harm, or humiliation amounts to assault and should be dealt with as a police matter (see below).

Policy

Our Village has a duty of care to provide a safe workplace, and ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that staff, volunteers and other people are not exposed to health and safety risks.

Our Village accepts and acts on its duty of care. Any reported allegations of workplace bullying will be promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigated.

Bullying complaints will be handled in a confidential and procedurally fair manner. Where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed this will be clearly communicated to the relevant parties.

All parties will be treated with respect.

The person against whom the allegation is made has the right to natural justice (the right to know what is alleged against them, the right to put their case in reply, and the right for any decision to be made by an impartial decision-maker).

Related Documents

- Bullying Response Procedures

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Bullying Response Procedure

Drafted by	Katherine Hinton	Approved by	CEO
Version	1	Approved date	
Reviewed by	CEO	Next review date	

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Bullying Policy.

Responsibilities

It is the obligation and responsibility of every person to ensure that the workplace is free from bullying. The responsibility lies with every manager, staff member and volunteer to ensure that bullying does not occur in the workplace.

All staff and volunteers have:

- an entitlement to work in a safe and healthy workplace and to be treated with dignity and respect
- an entitlement to make a complaint in respect of any bullying behaviour
- a responsibility to take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- a responsibility to ensure they do not promote or engage in bullying and otherwise take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other people
- a responsibility to co-operate and comply with this policy and any other relevant policy.

It is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that:

- they understand, and are committed to, the right of all staff and volunteers to attend work and perform their duties without fear of being bullied in any form
- all reasonable steps to eliminate bullying are made so far as is reasonably practicable
- all applicable occupational health and safety legislation is observed
- all staff and volunteers are regularly educated and made aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to providing a workplace free from bullying
- they provide an environment which discourages bullying, and set an example by their own behaviour
- all complaints are treated seriously and confidentially
- they are as far as practicable aware of whether bullying is occurring, whether complaints are received or not, relying on such indices as:

- sudden increases in absenteeism
 - unexplained requests for transfers
 - behavioural changes such as depression
 - sudden deterioration in work performance
- they take immediate and appropriate action if they become aware of any bullying or offensive behaviour
 - any reported allegations of workplace bullying are promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigated

It is the responsibility of the Executive Leadership Team Members to ensure that:

- guidance and education is provided, where requested and/or appropriate, to cases and subsequent decisions relating to bullying
- ongoing support and guidance is provided to management, staff and volunteers in relation to the prevention of bullying
- this policy is displayed in the workplace and easily accessible to all workers and volunteers.

Procedures

Complaints

Staff or volunteers who believe they are the subject of bullying or victimisation should take firm, positive and prompt action.

Where possible, the staff member / volunteer should make the person(s) aware of the behaviour that they are identifying as bullying, that they find this behaviour offensive and unwelcome and ask that the behaviour stops.

If the behaviour continues, or if the staff member/volunteer feels unable to speak to the person(s) directly, they should contact their Manager, or in the case of a volunteer their supervising staff member. Alternatively, staff or volunteers may contact the Head of Corporate Services & People or another manager with whom they feel comfortable.

Our Village will provide support and ascertain the nature of the complaint. Staff / volunteers who report bullying will be protected against retaliation.

Informal Intervention Procedure

Once someone reports bullying to a Manager/Member of ELT, the Manager/Member of ELT must:

- Explain the rights and responsibilities of the staff member or volunteer under the relevant policy and procedures.

Informal intervention may be done through a process of either mediation or conciliation. During informal intervention the respondent will be made aware of the allegations being made against them and given the right to respond. Interventions at this stage should adopt a confidential, non-confrontational approach with a view to resolving the issue.

This procedure will be complete when the alleged harasser respects the individual's request to cease unwanted and unwelcome behaviour, or when the complainant accepts that the behaviour is not properly described as bullying. If neither of these outcomes occurs, the organisation's formal procedure should be followed.

Formal Intervention Procedure

If the informal intervention has not been successful, or was not possible/appropriate, the Manager must then escalate the complaint to the Head of Corporate Services and People and/or the CEO who may carry out a formal investigation in relation to the complaint of bullying or victimisation.

The formal procedure will be coordinated by the Head of Corporate Services & People or CEO as appropriate.

Formal investigations may be conducted internally or by an external investigator.

An investigation involves collecting information about the complaint and then making a finding (on the balance of probabilities) based on the available information as to whether or not the alleged behaviour occurred. Once a finding is made, the investigator will make recommendations about resolving the complaint or implementing disciplinary action (up to and including termination of employment [for employees] or the cessation of the contract or engagement).

The investigator may need to interview the parties involved (which may include the complainant, the respondent, and any witnesses) to obtain information regarding the complaint. The investigator will comprehensively and accurately document all information obtained during the interviews including the parties involved, timing, location, and nature of conduct complained about.

If the investigator considers it appropriate for the safe and efficient conduct of an investigation, workplace participants may be suspended from work/volunteering or provided with alternative duties during an investigation in which case they will be paid their normal pay during any such period.

Throughout the investigation process, all parties involved in the investigation will be regularly kept informed about the investigation.

Records are to be forwarded electronically to the Head of Corporate Services & People or the CEO to be filed in a confidential folder. These records should be kept for a period of seven years.

On the basis of the findings, possible outcomes of the investigation may include, but will not be limited to, any combination of the following:

- Counselling;

- Disciplinary action against the respondent (for employees) (e.g. transfer, training, written warning or dismissal);
- Cessation of engagement (for volunteers/visitors) or contract (for third parties)
- Official warnings that are noted in the respondent's personnel file;
- Disciplinary action against the complainant (but only if there is strong evidence that the complaint was vexatious or malicious);
- Formal apologies and undertaking that the behaviour will cease;
- Conciliation/mediation conducted by an impartial third party where the parties to the complaint agree to a mutually acceptable resolution

Next steps

On completion of the investigation, all parties will be informed about the investigation findings and the outcome of the investigation – as appropriate and in line with confidentiality obligations.

Following an investigation concerning a bullying complaint (irrespective of the findings), the manager concerned will:

- consult with the parties involved to monitor the situation and their wellbeing; and
- educate and remind all employees and volunteers of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to providing a workplace free from bullying

Procedures for Dealing with Criminal Conduct

Some forms of severe bullying (physical attack, for example, or obscene phone calls) may constitute criminal conduct. While Our Village is committed to treating most complaints about bullying at an organisational level as far as possible, this type of conduct is not suited to internal resolution. Such complaints should be treated by the criminal justice system. Employees or volunteers should be advised of the option of police support or intervention. It is not the obligation or duty of the organisation to report such matters to the police on behalf of the complainant.

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